

BRIEFING NOTES

NAME OF GROUP:	PLANNING COMMISSION
DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING:	Wednesday, April 11, 2018, 1:25 p.m., Council Chambers, County-City Building, 555 South 10 th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska.
MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:	Tom Beckius, Tracy Corr, Tracy Edgerton, Deanne Finnegan, Maja Harris, Christy Joy and and Dennis Scheer; (Chris Hove and Sandra Washington absent).
OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:	David Cary and Teresa McKinstry of the Planning Dept.; Miki Esposito of Public Works & Utilities; and Bob Caldwell of NEBCO, Inc.
STATED PURPOSE:	Briefing on “Transportation Strategies”

Chair Dennis Scheer called the meeting to order and acknowledged the posting of the Open Meetings Act in the back of the room.

Miki Esposito stated that an extensive review was done by the Transportation Coalition. She Co-Chaired along with Bob Caldwell.

Bob Caldwell stated that everyone has traveled on some street, at some point today. This is a very important part of a community. If you don't have a road, you can't have a sewer, a house and can't grow as a community. There were many coalition members from a lot of different areas and associations. There was great expertise. When the Mayor put this coalition together, there were five main questions. They were what the current system preservation, optimization and expansion needs are, what level of transportation maintenance citizens expect, what transportation investments are needed to continue to improve quality of life in Lincoln, what will those desired investments cost and what are the best mechanisms for the City to fund its current and expanding infrastructure needs. We started off with looking at perceptions of system conditions. Most people believed system conditions were a six out of ten and thought they should be an eight. Then we asked about funding. They believed funding was a three out of ten and thought it should be an eight. The coalition jumped on a bus and looked at roads all across the City. We talked about cost. There are 2,600 lane miles to maintain in the City of Lincoln. It costs around \$600,000 a lane mile to resurface a street. There are 450 traffic signals and it costs about \$300,000 to signalize an intersection. There will be 120,000 new people by the year 2040. We did a peer city comparison. Other cities were surveyed. Lincoln spends around \$2,400 a lane mile. Our peer cities spend around \$10,000 a lane mile. Pavement conditions City wide were mapped out. A lot of the core areas have roads in dire need of

repair. The coalition spent several meetings dealing with non-monetary measures such as design standards and cost savings ideas. We came up with over 28 recommendations to the City. We used a lot of previous ideas that haven't been acted on and came up with some new ideas. We are using a 12 foot lane width on a lot of our roads when national standards say 11 feet. That is an immediate cost savings. We talked about simplifying the impact fee system. There were some logical things that everyone was open to change. There are 30 different things that can be done without spending any money. We looked at preservation and optimization in detail. Based on our analysis, there is a \$21 million gap in maintenance. There is a \$7 million gap in repair and a \$5 million gap in growth for a total annual gap of \$33 million. We looked at added revenue. No one wanted to raise property taxes. The second option was wheel tax. No one really wanted to raise the wheel tax. There wasn't a lot of interest in raising the wheel tax. We looked at what the Nebraska State Legislature has given cities as options. We are currently using ¼ cent sales tax for public safety that ends in September of this year. We took a poll and voted on the options. We want to find funding for \$20 million with a ½ cent sales tax. We need five City Council members to place this on a ballot. We are giving presentations to explain these ideas about roads and streets. In most groups, someone will tell you about how bad the roads are in their part of town. We tried to answer sales tax and residents versus sales tax and non-residents. It is about 70 percent residents to 30 percent non-residents. In a matter of fairness, we think this helps everyone pay for the road improvements. \$21 million per year is needed for system preservation and maintenance, \$7 million per year is needed for system optimizations like signal upgrades and maximizing traffic flow and \$5 million per year is needed for system growth and new streets. We looked at peer cities all across the Midwest. We know where all the growth areas are. We don't have a funding mechanism for roads. Some cost saving measures are already being implemented. The Green Light Lincoln program is working. We think a citizens group should be formed to oversee any possible future funding and make sure it is being spent the way it was intended. Inflation on construction is 5 to 6 percent a year. We go backwards every year in our ability to fund. Learn more at www.lincolnonthefront.com.

Harris questioned if recommendations were given on how funds should be distributed between the three categories. Caldwell believes there is equal concern for all three categories. Esposito stated that in practice, we stick true to needs assessment data to provide where the investment goes.

Corr wondered about the map that was shown. Esposito stated that roads on the map shown as green are streets in good condition with low impact. Streets shown as yellow are in need of rehab. That is the bread and butter of this program. Those roads shown as red are in need of full reconstruction. That requires a heavy investment. Corr questioned how these would be prioritized. Esposito stated that staff has been talking internally about how to deliver this program to the community. We would like to break the map into quadrants. There will be some limited reconstruction as we can afford it, and patch and fix what we can and maintain

the good streets. We have been talking about bundling projects. There will be a lot of residential work. Caldwell added that we have talked about the four quadrants of the City and having geographical diversity. We sat down with each member of the City Council and discussed the program with them and how it relates to their area.

Corr believes there will be blowback from the core of the city versus new growth areas. Esposito stated the residentials in need of repair will be based on geographic data. This will be programmed in to the CIP (Capital Improvement Program). We will use data and street conditions as a driver. We hope to focus on residentials.

Finnegan inquired about the timeline moving forward. Caldwell responded that their job as a coalition was to come up with options. The discussion has been to try and get City Council members come to a decision in a May/June timeframe and hopefully have a vote in November of this year.

Finnegan noted that this will be perceived as a tax. The Mayor has a huge job of trying to balance when to bring these forward. She wondered how you bring these forward. The campaign will need to be well thought through.

Corr has served on a sales tax committee before. If the current one expires in September, there would be a gap before this one would take place. She questioned how long it is envisioned this sales tax increase would last. Caldwell stated there is a need for \$20 to \$28 million annually over ten years. He believes ½ cent is the clearest path, but the decision is up to the City Council. Corr understands that there hasn't been a concrete request. Esposito stated that part of the coalition recommendation is to engage about what these recommendations consist of. We have more work to do with City Council on how they want to package these. There could be a mix of funding options. Caldwell believes that is what the City Council is wrestling with.

Esposito stated that in a ten year scenario, there could be a national change about this. Corr noted that sales tax is seen as a regressive tax. Perhaps this should be in the regular budget. She believes it is unpopular no matter how you package this.

Harris wondered how soon you can begin to make sales tax funded improvements. Esposito responded that if funding was a certainty, we would have a cash flow in place. We would work on an RFP (Request For Proposal) and how projects would look, how we would package them. Construction would probably not start till fall 2019 or 2020.

Beckius asked if you get \$20 to \$28 million in potential annual funding, can the gap (difference with \$33 million) be met with other cost savings measures. Esposito will say they will try their hardest. We are building better infrastructure with best practices. This is the greatest

challenge. We are moving forward on all the recommendations. They will look to make their funding more cost efficient. This will be part of the budget discussion.

Beckius questioned if this were not to happen, would we anticipate Public Works reorienting itself with its standards? Esposito thinks we would still implement best practice and standards, but we would have to purchase more equipment for pothole repair. We have already committed to 11 foot lanes from 12. We need to analyze more what we can do. That is another function of the proposed transportation committee. Medians are good for access control and safety, but cost more. Can we work with the County Engineer on a better design? There is a RUTS standards. We are looking at making it more sensible in the future.

Beckius stated it will be interesting to hear updates in the future. It would be helpful for the Planning Commission.

Corr noticed that many of the roads have changes in the green turn arrows. Esposito stated that is part of Green Light Lincoln.

Caldwell thanked everyone for the time to present this. He wants everyone to talk with their friends and neighbors about this. Contact your City Council member and discuss this. Help us advance this to the City Council.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:05 p.m.